

Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Report

Pre School

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| TUSLA Identifier: | TU2015FL316 | | |
| Name of Service: | The Village Montessori | | |
| Address of Service: | Malahide Yacht Club, St. James's Terrace, Malahide, Co. Dublin | | |
| Eircode: | K36 V974 | | |
| Name of Registered Provider: | Katie Verdon | | |
| Service type: | Sessional | | |
| Date(s) of Inspection: | 18/06/2025 | | |
| No of pre-school children: | AM | 15 | PM N/A |
| Address of the Early Years Inspectorate: | Early Years Inspectorate, 181-189 Lakeshore Drive, Airside Business Park, Swords, Co. Dublin K67 Y5C6. | | |
| Inspection undertaken by: | AM Coyle | | |
| Title: | Early Years Inspector | | |
| Authority to Inspect | | | |
| The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate carries out inspections of Early Years Services under Section 58(J) of the Child Care Act 1991 (as inserted by Section 92 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013). | | | |
| Conditions if applicable | Not applicable. | | |

Description of service

The Village Montessori was established in 2010 as a privately owned Early Years' Service. The service provides sessional preschool care and education to children from 2 years 8 months until they commence attendance at primary school. The service is located on the first floor of Malahide yacht club in Malahide Village; sanitary facilities are located directly off the care room and the service has access to an enclosed outdoor area to the front of the building. The service operates from 9:00am to 12:30 pm Monday to Friday and provides the option of children attending for an additional 30 minutes for an extra fee. The service participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme (ECCE) scheme.

Staffing

The service employs 4 staff members including the registered provider who works directly with the children on a daily basis. Two staff members are employed in a relief capacity. On the day of inspection there were 2 staff members including the registered provider present in the service.

Methodology

Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate is the independent statutory regulator of early years services in Ireland. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 define the duty of a registered provider to ensure the safety and well-being of children and to comply with these regulations. This Act also gives Tusla the authority to assess compliance with the regulations. The purpose of regulation in relation to early years services is to ensure that the care, safety, and well-being of children attending such services is upheld. Inspections of early years services are planned based on the following:

- Previous inspection history
- Any information received in relation to the service

The findings on inspection are based on:

- Information obtained through examination of documentation
- Direct observation
- Discussion with relevant staff

This inspection was unannounced and focused on the area of governance, health, welfare and development of child and safety. The inspection may also focus on other areas as required.

The inspection focused on an examination of compliance under regulations 9, 11,19,23,25 and 26; These findings are outlined within the relevant regulations within this report.

Inspection findings are documented in the inspection report which is first issued in draft format to the service with an opportunity to respond to any findings. Where statutory requirements are identified as not being met, the registered provider must demonstrate how they have rectified the non-compliance and will prevent any non-compliance from re occurring. The Corrective Action and Preventive Action plan (CAPA) will be used to inform decisions about compliance with regulatory requirements. Where the registered provider fails to meet the statutory requirements an escalation process may be commenced.

The inspectorate reserves the right to edit responses received for reasons including clarity, completeness and compliance with administrative and legal processes.

The contents of the report are compiled by the inspectorate body.

Acknowledgments

The inspector wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the registered provider, staff and children who were present on the day of the inspection.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 9 – Management and recruitment

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that-

- (a) the service has a designated person in charge and a named person who is able to deputise as required,*
- (b) at all times during the period when the pre-school service is being carried on, the designated person in charge or the named person referred to in subparagraph (a) is on the premises, and*

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that each employee, unpaid worker and contractor is suitable and competent taking into consideration the nature of the needs of children, including by-

- (a) consideration of references from the person's past employers, if any, and in particular the most recent employer, if any,*
- (b) consideration of references from reputable sources in the case of a person who has no past employers,*

(c) consideration of the vetting disclosure received from the National Vetting Bureau of the Garda Síochána in accordance with the Act of 2012 in respect of the person, and

(d) ensuring, insofar as is practicable, that where a person has lived in a state other than the State for a period of longer than 6 consecutive months, he or she provides police vetting from the police authorities in that state.

(4) A registered provider shall ensure that, without prejudice to the generality of paragraph (2) and subject to paragraphs (5) and (6), each employee working directly with children attending the service holds at least a major award in Early childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Qualifications Framework or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The service had a designated person in charge and a named person to deputise as needed.

(b) The registered provider was present and in charge of the service when the inspectors arrived unannounced to the service and was present for the duration of the inspection.

On the day of inspection, a total of 4 staff files, including the registered providers file and 3 staff members were reviewed.

(2)(a) Two written references were available for the registered provider, 2 validated written references were available for 1 staff member.

(b) Two written references from a source other than a past employer were available for 1 staff member.

(c) Garda vetting disclosures had been obtained for all 4 adults whose files were reviewed. The service demonstrated compliance with the Early Years Inspectorate Regulatory Notice requiring services to renew Garda vetting every three years.

(d) International police vetting was available for 1 adult who had resided outside of the Irish jurisdiction for more than 6 consecutive months as an adult.

(4) Documentary evidence was available to confirm that 4 staff members whose files were reviewed and who work directly with children in the service held an appropriate childcare qualification at Level 5 or higher on the National Framework of Qualifications or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent.

Non-Compliance Information

(2)(a) & (b) Two validated written references were not available for 1 staff member.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

(2)(a) & (b) Registered provider received the 2 references and validated them.

Preventive Action

(2)(a) & (b) References will be kept on file.

Supporting documentation submitted

One validated written reference received.

Summary Comment

The registered provider submitted 1 validated written reference. As 2 validated written references were required the regulatory requirement for regulation 9 management and recruitment has not been addressed and remains outstanding. This will be reviewed at the next inspection of the service.

Part III – Management and Staff

Regulation 11 - Staffing levels

(1) Subject to this Regulation, a registered provider shall ensure that there is at all times an adequate number of adults working directly with the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) Subject to paragraphs (4) and (5), a registered provider of a full day care service or a part-time day care service shall ensure that at all times the minimum ratio of adults to children specified in column (3) of Part 1 of Schedule 6 opposite a particular reference number specified in column (1) of that Part in respect of the age range of the children specified in column (2) thereof at that reference number is satisfied.

(8) Without prejudice to paragraphs (2) to (7)-

(c) a registered provider of a sessional pre-school service shall ensure that, where the person in charge operates the service single-handedly, a second person familiar with the operation of the service and in a position to provide assistance to the person in charge in operating the service is, at all times, within close distance of the service and available to attend the service to assist the person in charge in the event of an emergency

Compliance Information

(1) On the day of inspection there was an adequate number of staff members working directly with the children attending the service.

(3) The adult to child ratio was correct in the service when the inspector arrived unannounced and remained so throughout the inspection.

The following adult to child ratios were observed during the inspection:

- There were 15 pre-school children aged 3 years 5 months to 5 years being cared for by 2 staff members.

(8)(c) Not applicable as the service does not operate singlehandedly.

Part V - Care of Child in Pre-school Service

Regulation 19 - Health, welfare and development of child

(1) A registered provider shall, in providing a pre-school service, ensure that-

(a) each child's learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the pre-school service through the provision of the appropriate activities, interaction, materials and equipment, having regard to the age and stage of development of the child, and

Compliance Information

(1)(a) The following observations are examples of how each child's learning, development and well-being was facilitated within the service:

Basic needs:

- Both staff members in the service were observed warmly engaging with the children throughout the inspection. The staff members were very familiar with the children and their individual needs and were seen using warm vocal tones, positive language and positioning themselves at the children's level when engaging with them. The children were observed to be very comfortable in their environment and sought out the staff members for support and guidance as they needed it.
- All the children in attendance were toilet trained, and children accessed the toilet located immediately adjacent to the care room as they needed, the children's independence was encouraged with assistance and support provided discreetly as required.

- Parents provide the children's snacks. These included sandwiches, rice cakes, cheese, crackers yogurts, fruit, and drinks. The children's water bottles were available within their reach, should they feel thirsty at any stage. The staff members chatted with the children during snack time, encouraging conversation and promoting a relaxed atmosphere.
- During the inspection the children were afforded the opportunity for a change of environment in the outdoor play area to the front of the service and the staff members ensured that the children had suncream applied prior to going outside.

Supporting relationships around children:

- The children were observed to engage and interact comfortably with the two staff members, using their names in conversations and play, and the staff members were observed responding to the children in an interested and positive manner. The staff members praised children for their behaviours especially when they were helpful to others, took turns and shared resources.
- The staff members were observed to be calm and responsive with the children and there was an emphasis on praise and encouragement in the service to promote positive behaviour.
- The children appeared confident and relaxed in their environment and were observed naturally forming small groups and engaging in a range of tabletop and floor play activities during the inspection.
- The service values partnership with parents, on the day of inspection the children's parents were invited into the service for the children's graduation ceremony which happened at the end of the session.

Physical and material environment:

- In the care room resources were easily available and accessible on low level shelving. The children demonstrated familiarity with navigating their environment to access the toys and play resources they chose to play with.
- The indoor environment was bright and welcoming for the children. The room was equipped with specialised Montessori materials including sensorial, practical life, numeracy, cultural and literacy resources all of which were readily accessible to the children. The children were observed to choose the materials that they wanted to play with and were well supported in extending their play experiences by the staff members.

- An enclosed outdoor play area is located to the front of the building. The area is surfaced with a combination of artificial grass and a smaller concreted area. A slide was provided for the children to play on along with additional play resources that the staff members brought outside for the children to use.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child

A registered provider shall ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and that the environment of the service is safe.

Compliance Information

General Safety:

- The external doors were appropriately secured to prevent the children from exiting unsupervised and to restrict unauthorised persons from gaining access to the service. The service is located on the first floor, entry to the service was accessed by a call bell on the ground floor which a staff member answers to facilitate access.
- The outdoor play area was gated and secured fencing to prevent a child gaining unsupervised access to the adjacent carpark or other source of danger.
- Cleaning agents were stored safely out of the reach of children on high shelving and in locked cupboards.

Infection Control:

- Thermostatically controlled warm water, liquid soap and paper hand towels were provided to support effective hand hygiene in the sanitary accommodation and at the wash hand basins in the care rooms in the service.
- The premises, play equipment and materials were in a clean and hygienic condition.

Administration of Medication:

- No child was observed having medication administered on the day of inspection.

Fire Safety:

- The fire exits were clearly signposted and were unobstructed.

Non-Compliance Information

Infection Control:

1. Children's snack food, some of which contained meat and dairy produce, were not stored under refrigerated conditions, and were kept in the children's bags at room temperature on the day of inspection. This increased the risk of bacteria multiplying to levels which could result in food poisoning.
- 2.

Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

Infection Control:

1. The fridge is situated next to the bags and coats in the corridor. Some children refuse to put their lunch in the fridge. These children bring a freezer bag to school to store their lunch in. All other children store lunch in the fridge.

Preventive Action

Infection Control:

1. All children will be asked to use the fridge.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 23 - Safeguarding health, safety and welfare of child has been reviewed and accepted.

Part VI – Safety

Regulation 25 - First aid

(1) A registered provider shall ensure that a person trained in first aid for children is, at all times, immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service.

(2) A registered provider shall ensure that a suitably equipped first aid box for children-

(a) is safely stored in an easily accessible and conspicuous position on the premises, and

(b) is available to the children attending the pre-school service at all times.

Compliance Information

(1) A person trained in first aid including first aid responder (FAR) training was immediately available to the children attending the pre-school service as evidenced in the staff roster and the in-date FAR certifications provided for inspection in respect of the registered provider and staff member both of whom work in the service on a daily basis.

(2)(a) and (b) The first aid box was suitably equipped and safely stored in readily accessible positions on the premises, out of the reach of children.

Part VI - Safety

Regulation 26 - Fire safety measures

- (1) A registered provider shall ensure that a record in writing is kept of-
- (a) any fire drill that takes place in the premises, and
 - (b) the number, type and maintenance record of fire fighting equipment and smoke alarms in the premises.
- (4) A notice of the procedures to be followed in the event of fire shall be displayed in a conspicuous position in the premises.

Compliance Information

- (1) (b) A record was kept of the number, type and maintenance of the firefighting equipment in the premises. The fire extinguishers were certified as having been serviced on 29/01/2024.
- (4) Notices of the procedures to be followed in the event of a fire were conspicuously displayed in the premises.

Non-Compliance Information

- (1)(a) A record was not maintained of fire drills which had been completed in the service. The most recent fire drill was recorded as having taken place on 20/12/2024.
- (b) A record was not available of the number, type and maintenance of the smoke alarms in the premises.

Corrective & Preventive Action submitted by the Registered Provider

Corrective Action

- (1)(a) Their fire drills record book has been updated.
- (b) Registered provider has contacted the Yacht Club to send them the details required and to send them the most recent certificate.

Preventive Action

- (1)(a) Monthly reminders are put in place to record monthly fire drill.
- (b) Registered provider will be requesting these details from the yacht club annually.

Supporting documentation submitted

Copy of fire drills and maintenance record for smoke alarms.

Summary Comment

The evidence submitted by the registered provider in relation to regulation 26 – Fire safety measures has been reviewed and accepted.